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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of cooperative education is to provide students with planned and evaluated work experiences which will enhance the integration of theory learned in the classroom. Secondary objectives include learning how to work, selecting appropriate career goals, and broadening and deepening humanistic learning. This position paper describes recommended planning, development, implementation, and evaluation procedures for cooperative education programs. Among the planning procedures described are surveying for market suitability, identifying the service area and amount of student interest, and determining sources of financial support. Two organizational patterns for program administration are described, and the roles of the coordinator, the instructor, the division chairman, the employer, the student, and the advisory committee are outlined. Procedural recommendations for the evaluation of students, the work station, and the program are made. Finally, specific suggestions for program operation in the areas of credit, grades, student load, student qualifications, levels of experience, and record keeping are provided. (NHM)

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UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM

Position Paper
on
Cooperative Education

I. Philosophy

Cooperative education, one form of off-campus experiential education, is an educational process by which the student's academic study is formally integrated with periods of planned and evaluated work experiences related to the student's educational objective. The student usually receives both financial remuneration and academic credit.

The Community College System believes that meaningful and appropriate learning can occur outside the formal classroom setting. Recognizing that cooperative education is one way by which such extramural learnings can occur, the System provides the means whereby academic credit may be awarded to a student who is pursuing an associate in applied science degree when the work experiences are relevant to his degree objective.

It is the belief of the Community College System that student participation in cooperative education experiences should be voluntary. Therefore, when cooperative education is formally included in the program of studies leading to an associate in applied science degree, suitable options should be provided those students who elect not to participate. However, when certain programs mandate it, cooperative work experiences may be required.

Whether or not a community college provides cooperative education in any, in some, or in all the associate in applied science programs which it offers is a matter for the faculty and administration of that college to decide.

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It is recognized that there are both advantages and disadvantages in offering cooperative education on either a parallel or alternating basis. Whether a college offering cooperative education chooses either one or both methods should be determined by the faculty and administration of that college, giving consideration to the curriculum, the needs of the students, the needs of the employers, and the resources available to the college.

It is the right of a receiving college to determine which credits earned in another college are acceptable to it. The constituent colleges of the Community College System not only accept credit for cooperative education from an accredited college or university, but also accept the credit in satisfaction of degree requirements, subject to the criteria for awarding credit for cooperative education established by the Community College Council.

The Community College System acknowledges that other approaches to experiential education may have occupational, academic and/or personal value. While recognizing the value of such experiences, the Community College System has not yet incorporated any of them into its educational program.

II. Objectives

The primary objective of cooperative education is to provide the student with planned and evaluated work experiences which will enhance the integration of theory learned in the classroom with the pragmatic requirements of the work situation.

Secondary objectives include learning how to work, selecting appropriate career goals, learning to work with others, and the broadening and deepening of the student's humanistic learnings.

In addition to the objectives relating directly to the student, it should be the conscious objective of the appropriate faculty of the college to update curriculum content so that the gap between classroom instruction and the reality of the present work situation is minimized.

III. Program

A. Planning

If a college decides to initiate a program of cooperative education, or if it decides to expand into program areas for which it has previously not offered such experiences, a suitable period of planning should be provided. A variety of factors will have an influence on the length of the required planning period.

Throughout the planning period, appropriate opportunities should be provided for the participation of the faculty, administration, students and advisory groups. In addition there should be assessment of the resources available with which to provide cooperative education in the selected program areas. The long-range plans of the college should be considered.

B. Development

The available work stations should be identified during the period of program planning and development. Potential employers must be familiarized with the philosophy and purpose of cooperative education within the Community College System. Attempts should be made to obtain in writing a commitment from each prospective employer of his willingness to participate in the program. The cooperative education model(s) to be used should be explored at this time.

C. Implementation

During the period of implementation, continuous communications among potential employers, faculty, administrators, program coordinators and cooperative education coordinator are essential. Also during this period, such agreements between the employer and the college as may be necessary or desirable are prepared and signed by the appropriate persons. The agreements should carefully delineate the responsibilities of the respective parties.

Students should be registered for cooperative work experience only when it is known that an appropriate work station is available and only after the agreements referred to above have been signed. In addition, training plans must have been developed and agreed to by all parties involved.

D. Evaluation

Provisions must be made for a continuous process of evaluation of the cooperative education experience by the students, faculty, work supervisors, program coordinators, and cooperative education coordinator. The evaluation should be based on behavioral objectives which were agreed upon prior to the beginning of the work experiences.

The faculty, with the assistance of appropriate program coordinators and the cooperative education coordinator, should periodically review the cooperative education program to determine that the program is educationally sound, that it is contributing to the objectives of the educational programs of the students, and is contributing to the overall educational objectives of the college.

IV. Justification and Resources

A. Market Suitability

If a college decides to explore the feasibility of offering a program of cooperative work experience, it should initiate a comprehensive survey within its service area to determine the availability of appropriate work stations for those program areas in which it offers an associate in applied science degree. The survey should attempt to determine the willingness of employers to participate in a cooperative education program; the number of work stations available immediately, as well as the projected number available in the future; the level of academic preparation required prior to the off-campus assignment; and the adequacy of the supervision at the work location.

The market suitability survey may have implications for curriculum and/or program changes.

B. Service Area

If a college considers implementing or expanding a cooperative education program, a conscious effort must be made to identify its service area for the particular program. Topographic, demographic and industrial data should be included in the determination of the service area as it relates to the cooperative education program.

The size of the service area may be larger if the cooperative work experiences are offered on an alternating basis rather than on a parallel basis. However, this is not always true. For example, limited funds for travel may preclude travel by the coordinators beyond the basic service area of the college.

C. Student Interest

The success of a cooperative education program is dependent to a significant degree upon the amount of student interest in participating in the program. A college considering the implementation or expansion of such a program will need to determine the level of student interest.

Colleges offering cooperative education who are considering expanding into new program areas can probably assume that student interest in the new program will be comparable to the level of interest in the existing programs. However, consideration should be given to any unusual or unique characteristics of the relevant programs and/or the students enrolled in them.

Colleges implementing a program of cooperative work experience for the first time can probably gain some insight into potential student interest from the experiences of other colleges where the program has been offered. In any event, a survey of students and potential students to determine their interest seems appropriate and desirable.

D. Financial Support

The decision to implement or expand a program of cooperative education implies a willingness on the part of the administration of the college to provide the financial resources necessary for the efficient and effective operation of the program. Certain budgetary support must be provided in addition to the salary of a coordinator of cooperative education or that of an instructor/cooperative work supervisor.

Budgetary support should provide for the orientation of students to the concept of cooperative education; for the development and production of printed materials such as brochures; for the in-service education of college personnel; for secretarial assistance; for on-site visits of cooperative education coordinators, instructor/coordinators, and/or other college personnel for the purpose of evaluating students, employers, and the educational value of the cooperative work experience.

If a program is initiated or expanded using extramural resources, it is imperative that long-range plans be made to absorb the program costs into the regular budget at such time as the external funds are terminated. In such instances, it is also important that there be adopted realistic approaches to program development and evaluation.

V. Organization

A successful cooperative education program requires that an organizational structure be established. The functions of each role incumbent must be clearly defined and understood by all those within the college who are in any way involved in the cooperative education program.

A. Administration of the Program

Two organizational patterns exist, and will probably continue to exist, within the constituent colleges of the Community College System. The respective colleges are free to select the most appropriate one.

The more structured pattern consists of a coordinator of cooperative education who is responsible to the office of academic affairs of the college, and instructor/cooperative work supervisors who

are responsible to their division chairmen, who in turn are responsible to the office of academic affairs. In such an organizational pattern, the position of coordinator of cooperative education has a staff relationship to the office of academic affairs and to the division chairmen.

The less-structured pattern of organization includes only instructor/cooperative work supervisors. The line of responsibility of such persons continues to be to the division chairman.

B. Role Differentiation

Coordinator of Cooperative Education - The coordinator's responsibility is primarily to serve as a liason between cooperating employers and potential cooperative employers and division chairmen, instructors, counselors, and students. This person's specific responsibilities should include the following: assist the instructor/cooperative work supervisor in identifying appropriate work stations; contact employers to promote cooperative arrangements; negotiate agreements with cooperating employers; assist the instructor/cooperative work supervisor in developing training agreements, in evaluating student performance and the adequacy of the work station, and in evaluating the educational value of the cooperative education experiences.

Instructor/Cooperative Work Supervisor - The instructor/cooperative work supervisor is responsible for the development of program and performance objectives for the cooperative work experience program in a subject area and for the students enrolled in it. This person also has the primary responsibility for the evaluation of students, the

adequacy of the work station, and the educational value of the cooperative work experience in his subject area.

In the final analysis, it is the instructor/cooperative work supervisor who links classroom instruction, work experience, and the student's career goal into a series of integrated, practical, learning experiences. To achieve this objective, the instructor/cooperative work supervisor shall have the specific responsibilities for negotiating employer agreements in the absence of a coordinator of cooperative education; preparing training plans for the students assigned to him and visiting such students on a regular basis at the place of employment; evaluating the student; and assigning the final grade.

Division Chairman - The division chairman has the same responsibilities for a program of cooperative work experience within the division as he has for all other educational programs of the division. This person has the responsibility for providing the leadership during the decision-making process leading to the decision to either provide or not provide cooperative work experiences in the associate in applied science programs assigned to the division. If the decision is to offer such a program, this person has the responsibility for directing the planning and implementation as well as the general supervision of the program after implementation in addition to the specific responsibility to make the instructor/cooperative work supervisor assignments within that division.

Employer - It is the responsibility of the employer to provide the student with work experiences which are consistent with the training plan and to provide on-the-job supervision and instruction which will assure the student of meaningful learning experiences relevant to his occupational goal.

The student shall be remunerated at a rate commensurate with the work performed. In no instance shall the pay be less than applicable minimum wage scales. The employer shall also provide such other benefits which are appropriate or required by law. Working conditions shall be such as to not endanger the health or safety of the student.

Evaluation of the student's work performance is the joint responsibility of the employer and the instructor/cooperative work supervisor.

Students - The students can expect to have clearly-defined objectives for a cooperative work experience but should also be aware that they are ultimately responsible for progress toward those goals. Students must be conscientious in fulfilling the responsibilities of their work situation, and keep the instructor/cooperative work supervisor informed about any problems or changes which affect college study or the cooperative work experiences. The students should be open-minded in evaluating their progress and be willing to discuss candidly all phases of employment with both the employer and the instructor/cooperative work supervisor.

Advisory Committee - The advisory committee can assist the college in assuring the quality of the cooperative work program by sharing its collective knowledge and experience with those responsible for the program.

The membership of the advisory committee should include students, graduates of the program area in which cooperative education is offered, representatives of cooperating employers, and potential cooperating employers. It is desirable that employer representatives include persons from various levels of management.

VI. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation of the cooperative education program should be a continuous process and should include a regular assessment of the student's progress toward the attainment of specific performance objectives, of the work station as an experiential center providing learning experiences directed toward these objectives, and of the cooperative education program.

A. Evaluation of Students

The evaluation of the student should reflect the extent to which the person has achieved the objectives of an individual training plan. Assessments of both the student's job performance and personal development should be included in the evaluation process. Just as the training plan is the result of the joint effort of the student, the instructor/cooperative work supervisor, and the employer, so is the evaluation process. It should include inputs from the instructor/cooperative work supervisor based on regular site visits, but must also include inputs from the employer and the student.

B. Evaluation of the Work Station

Meaningful evaluation of the work station can only occur when there has been communication between college personnel, the student, and the employer which result in a clear understanding on the part of each of the purposes of cooperative education in general and of the objectives of the student's individual training plan. The evaluation procedures must provide for input by the student and by the employer. The instructor/cooperative work supervisor will add to these inputs the results of insights gained from personal observations and from interviews with the employer.

C. Evaluation of the Cooperative Education Program

It is recognized that the most accurate evaluation of the cooperative education program cannot be made until a college has several years' experience in offering the program. However, such a longitudinal evaluation is based in part on an accumulation of annual evaluations. Therefore, the procedures for evaluating the program should include an annual evaluation and a longitudinal evaluation.

The annual evaluation should include an assessment of student satisfaction, employer satisfaction, the extent to which the objectives of the training plan were achieved, and faculty support of the program.

In addition to the accumulation of annual evaluations, the longitudinal evaluation should attempt to determine whether students who have participated in the cooperative education program have

benefited therefrom in ways which are identifiable and measurable. A third component of the longitudinal evaluation of the cooperative education program should be an assessment of the impact the program has had on the curriculum and upon teaching methods.

The most important of the three components of the longitudinal evaluation is the determination of the benefits received, if any, by those participating in the cooperative education program when they are compared with those who elected not to participate.

VII. Program Operation

A. Credit

The Community College Council has approved awarding one (1) semester hour of academic credit for each eighty (80) hours of successful cooperative work experience. Cooperative education may be repeated to a maximum of ten (10) credits.

B. Grades

The grades A, B, C, D, E, I, and W are to be used when assigning grades to a student enrolled in cooperative education. If cooperative education is not a required course, the student may elect to enroll on a pass/fail basis.

C. Student Load

A student may enroll for no more than three (3) credit hours of cooperative education during any semester or summer session in which he is enrolled as a full-time student. An exception may be made only when an approved curriculum requires more than three (3) credits of cooperative education in a semester.

A student who is not enrolled for any other academic credit and who will be assigned to a work station on a full-time basis may, receive one hour of credit for each eighty hours of successful work experience, to a maximum of eight credits during the fall or spring semesters, two credits during the intersession, and four credits during the summer session.

D. Student Qualifications

Cooperative education is intended to integrate a student's academic study with periods of planned and evaluated work experiences related to his educational objective. It seems to follow from this definition that a student should not be assigned to a cooperative education work station until he has satisfactorily completed at least one course above the introductory level in the area of specialization he has elected. Except in unusual circumstances, a student should be not assigned to a cooperative education work station until he has completed the equivalent of one semester of full-time study.

One important function of a community college is to provide educational opportunities for those in its service area who are already employed on a full-time basis. Such persons often pursue an educational program related to their employment. Cooperative education, as defined by the Community College System, seems not to be intended for such students; therefore, only in very unusual situations should students be enrolled in cooperative education if the work station is to be the position they already occupy.

E. Levels of Experience

Repeated registrations in cooperative education should provide the student with work experiences which reflect the increased competencies resulting from his classroom learnings. This progression should be readily identifiable by a comparison of the successive training plans.

F. Records

Files should be maintained for each employer and for each student participating in the cooperative education program.

The file for the employer should contain a copy of the agreement between the college and the employer, the instructor/work supervisor's evaluation of the work experiences provided by the employer, and the student's evaluation of the work station.

The file for the student should contain a copy of the training plan, the employer's evaluation of the student's work performance, the instructor/work supervisor's evaluation of the student, and the student's evaluation of the work experience as it relates to his educational objective.

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